

Pentecost 18 B
23 September 2018
St. Peter's
Proverbs 31; James 3; Mark 9

“God speaks to you – Scriptures and Sermons”

Have you ever had the experience of being in an audience listening to a speaker and suddenly feeling as though that person was speaking directly and personally to you?

Many a celebrity preacher, speaking to an arena filled with 30,000 people has said something like this:

“Somewhere among you – I don’t know who you are – but you are here today – you are struggling

-- struggling with a relationship, an addiction, a sense of failure – and you don’t know where to turn.”

And in that crowd of people, hundreds if not thousands are thinking to themselves

- He is speaking to me, about me
- because such struggles are universal.

Human speech depends on such artifice, but God’s speech does not.

When God speaks to us, there are human words used

- those of the Bible,
- or devotional books,
- or sermons,
- or hymns and songs.

**But those human words are not the end of God’s speaking,
but the beginning.**

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Consider creation – in the beginning, God said “*Let there be light.*” Those words were the catalyst for the existence of light, oceans, animals, and the whole cosmos.

When I say, “the sun is warm”, my words *represent* reality – they describe something else.

“The sun” refers to the orb in the sky.

“Is warm” refers to the heat of its rays.

When God says, “The sun is warm”

the words are what they say:

– the orb in the sky shines warmly.

When God speaks, the words themselves happen.

When God says, “*Bless the Lord, o my soul*”; my soul praises and glorifies God in response.

When Jesus says, “*Take up your cross and follow me,*”

those who belong to Jesus accept suffering and hardship to follow him into life.

When God speaks, the words are the catalyst

for change, transformation,

for the words themselves to happen.

So, too, the words of the Bible, the devotional books, sermons, or hymns are the catalyst for what God wants to happen in our lives.

Just to be clear – I am not God.

The words I speak in sermons are my words,

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formed by the Bible and inspired by the Holy Spirit,
but still human words.

Yet, the sermon is God speaking to **you** as surely as the Bible speaks.

Commented [PS1]:

My words are the catalyst for what God wants you to hear – and that often varies from person to person.

The true preacher is the Holy Spirit, who, we pray, enters each heart and mind along with the words and interprets them in the hearer.

For if the Spirit is not the interpreter, we are left to ourselves, or worse, to Satan's devices, and twist things to be far from the truth.

So we pray, Father, Send your Spirit with your Word, that our hearts may receive it willingly and understand it rightly. Amen

When it comes to God speaking to us, The Bible is where we begin.

- The scriptures we sing in the liturgy,
- the lessons that are read,
- the sermons,
- devotional books,
- songs and hymns, and the like
- **all are rooted in God's Word in the Bible.**

And the Bible –from Genesis to Revelation – is the story of Jesus, Son of the Father,

the Messiah and the people he saves and redeems through the Holy Spirit.

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So, when we consider the Bible passages we have heard today, how is God speaking to us?

what is God saying to us?

What does the description of the good wife,

warnings about conflict,

and cautions against power struggles in the church have to do with Jesus, and with us??

Certainly, each of these portions of God's Word speaks in a literal sense about the kind of persons God has created us to be.

Jesus came to show us that God cares

- about our home life,
- our marriages,
- our personal lives,
- and our individual choices.

So, when we hear God speak in Proverbs,

we hear how God desires men to choose a wife

and what sort of person a woman is who makes a good wife.

And while we may not measure up, it is hard to disagree

that if all marriages were built as this one is described, life would be very good indeed.

But there is more here that God is saying.

God is also describing how the church,

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as the community of people claimed for salvation in Jesus Christ, is to live.

The church is the bride of Christ – the good wife whom Jesus the Messiah adorns with his righteousness and clothes with salvation.

As the good wife, The church is to be

- hard-working,
- serving her Master,
- convinced of her value and purpose
- not wasting time or resources,
- but presenting herself to the world in the finest clothes
- and producing goods of the best quality to support the household of God.

The church finds joy in being the Bride of Christ and seeks nothing more than to demonstrate the goodness of God in all she does.

The church is to conduct itself in such a way as everyone speaks well of her and respects her.

...

And now it is not so great a leap to consider the relationships of the household itself.

If there is jealousy, infighting, and selfishness, it is no longer Christ who is Master and husband, but Satan.

The household of God falls apart and the reputation of the Bride of Christ is dishonored.

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This can be seen in a big way in the sadness within the Roman Catholic church right now,

but their story has also played out in other areas of the church including our own,

so we must not point fingers or take comfort in being Lutheran.

Instead, we must pray for the whole church and do our part to be a good wife for Jesus.

- being pure of heart
- peace loving,
- gentle at all times, and
- willing to yield to others.
- full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds.
- showing no favoritism and
- always sincere.

Jesus himself underscores such behavior within the church when he says, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.”

...

Having heard God speak to you as members of Jesus' church,

how will you live so that others see our congregation as the beautiful, ravishing Bride of Christ that Jesus calls us to be?

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QM1tr-j_bUQ Good for all ages

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4JK_6osCH74